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ABSTRACT

This policy brief examines the issue of Asian/Pacific American (APA) women in higher education administration. It reports that APA women face the "double bind" of discrimination because of their minority status and because they are female, and that compared to other minority women fewer APA women enter the education profession. The paper argues that in order to attract more APA women to higher education administration, colleges and universities must provide training programs in educational leadership that recognize cultural and gender differentiation, and also state their commitment to providing guidance and opportunities that make it possible for APA (and other minority women) to overcome the barriers that keep them from ascending the ranks of educational institutions. Higher education curriculum planners also need to enhance educational leadership programs by focusing the curriculum more on areas such as communication skills, goal setting, mentoring and networking, and organization and preparation. The paper also maintains that APA women who aspire to positions in higher education administration must actively participate in their own development. (Contains 20 references.) (MDM)

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Introduction

Asian/Pacific Americans (APA) are the best educated Americans. In 1980, APAs recorded more years of schooling than any other Americans. The number of APA women (in all APA ethnic groups except Vietnamese) exceeded the number of white women who completed four years of college (Hsia, 1988). In 1994, APA women posted a college graduation rate of 67%, the highest among all groups, including whites. The number of APA women earning doctorates doubled between 1984 and 1994 (American Council on Education, 1996).

Yet, in 1993, though touted as the bastion of multicultural learning and diversity training, higher education in the U.S. could "boast" a population of only 999 Asian American female administrators, a mere .7% of the total (137,432) population (American Council on Education, 1996).

With APA enrollment in four-year institutions currently up to 5.3% of the total undergraduate population (American Council on Education, 1996), the disparity in the proportion of APA students to APA women administrators is troubling. Therefore, educational leadership programs must consider change to facilitate bringing greater numbers of APA women into the ranks of administration.

Purpose

This policy brief examines the issue of APA women in higher education administration. It begins by looking at where APA women stand now, what keeps them out, what will bring them in, and what can be done in the context of undergraduate and graduate educational leadership curriculum development to encourage their further involvement in higher education administration. "If possibilities for exploring administration are not included in the undergraduate curriculum, then young women may be disadvantaged when determining their future personal and career goals" (Manera, 1995).

Definitions

Higher education administration: As that term is used by the American Council of Education in its *1995-96 Status Report of Minorities in Higher Education*:

> . . . [A]ll persons whose assignments require *primary* (and major) responsibility for management of the institution, or a customarily recognized department or subdivision thereof . . . [including those who serve] as President, Vice President, Dean, Director, or the equivalent, as well as officers subordinate to any of these administrators with such titles as Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, Executive Officer of academic departments (department heads, or the equivalent) if their principal activity is administrative.

Asian American or Asian/Pacific Islander (APA): The terms Asian/Pacific Islander, Asian American, or Asian/Pacific American (APA) are used interchangeably and describe, inclusively, those peoples of China, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Southeast and South Asia as well as Pacific Islanders (Hawaiian Islands, Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia) (Bradshaw, 1994).

APA Women in Educational Administration: A Novel Concept?

In considering why there are so few APA women in higher education administration, it is important to examine the research on the subject and the educational status of APA women today. We must look to the experience and report of APA and other minority women to understand what it takes to "break into" administration and succeed within it. We must understand what goes on in higher education to ensure that APA women avail themselves of training and opportunity in educational administrative and other programs. Examining these women and their educational experiences may provide the insight that policymakers require to improve the circumstance for those who aspire to administrative positions.

Research

Earlier studies comprised reports of APA women in traditional and nontraditional professions (Yamauchi, 1981) or of APA men and women in educational administration (Washington Association for Asian/Pacific American Education, 1980). These studies failed, however, to focus upon issues specific to APA women in higher education administration.

In 1980, the Washington Association for Asian/Pacific American Education conducted workshops for APA educational administrators in Washington. Key findings of the workshops are summarized below.

- APA women in administration had more obstacles to overcome and experienced more pressure in their administrative experience and ascendancy
- Being an APA educational administrator created family pressures that led to family break-ups
- The stereotyped image that men (APA and non-APA) held of APA women administrators unnecessarily burdened these women in their exercise of their administrative responsibilities

(Washington Association for Asian/Pacific American Education, 1980).

A 1981 study by Joanne Yamauchi examined communication patterns in APA women in traditionally male-dominated professional, prestigious, and administrative positions. The study sought to identify leadership behavior of APA women in the context of communication, sociocultural, and psychological variables. Yamauchi (1981) concluded that those APA women who successfully worked in nontraditional occupations (such as educational administration) were more highly educated and older than their counterparts in traditional occupations, and displayed skills "outside" the typical APA female orientation.

Lily Chu (1980) attributed the lack of representation of APA women in educational research to the sociocultural barriers commonly shared by women members of ethnic minorities (racial and sexual discrimination, lack of role models, lack of access to the "good ol' boy" system). She further described as unique barriers faced by APA women the commonly believed myth of Asian Americans' success in this country and the additional bondage of their cultural tradition in which women assume low status in the family and society, asking nothing and expecting little. These barriers in combination, she asserted, have prevented APA women from equal participation in the professional occupations (Chu, 1980).

The dearth of research in this area is a major deterrent to the progress of minority women to uniquely contribute to the notions of leadership and power. "Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American women are not only invisible in the higher education profession but are also invisible in the related literature" (Sagaria, 1988).

Some critical studies have recently emerged, however, that shed light not only on why there are so few minority women educational administrators but that argue for more focused studies of each minority group as well.

Singh et al. (1995) criticized studies that have focused on women faculty and administrators as having examined them as one group only and not having examined differences based on race. Chliwniak (1997) noted the difficulty in addressing issues of any minority women specifically given this "catch-all" approach and the resultant lack of research or evidentiary data for reference. Women, she reports, are generally underrepresented and this, therefore, explains why women of color and women from specific ethnic groups are very few in number.

Education

Howard-Hamilton and Williams (1996) observed that "colleges and universities seemed to be granting people of color access to a higher education; however, the degrees earned did not allow them opportunities to be part of the teaching or administration teams."

In 1993, bachelor's degrees were awarded to APA women in the following numbers (by thousands):

Business	6,531
Social sciences	2,910
Biological/life sciences	2,513
Health professions	1,940
Engineering	1,374
Education	812

(American Council on Education, 1996). Of all ethnic minority women, education ranked last only in the APA women's group (less than 1%). If educational administration is subsumed in the "Education" category, then the number of APA women entering advanced degree programs in educational administration is even more minute.

What prohibits young APA women from taking the challenge of entering a field so sparsely populated with their own? Perhaps a fear of the obstacles that have stood in the way of others before them? Perhaps resignation that the "field" is closed.

What Keeps APA Women Out? The Double Bind--and Then Some

Barriers exist to the minority woman who seeks a position as an educational administrator because she is a woman and because she is a minority. "She asks that [the barriers] be removed along with the mythology that she is sometimes doubly blessed because she can be exploited as a 'two-fer'" (Williams, 1985).

Being Asian--the Model Minority Myth

In the last 150 years of America's history, Asian Americans have been transformed from "uneducable heathens" to the "model minority" (Hsia, 1988). APAs were portrayed as an uncomplaining minority, whose people overcame difficult racial and socioeconomic barriers by winning wealth and respect through their own hard work, with no help from anyone else (Chu, 1980). While America heralded the accomplishments and successes of APAs in business and the academy, however, Takaki (1989) noted the glaring absence of APAs from higher levels of education administration, and in the upper strata of corporate hierarchy. He observed "though they are highly educated, Asian Americans are generally not present in positions of executive leadership and decision making."

The model minority stereotype penalizes APA women by assuming they do not need academic or professional guidance and support (Hune, 1997). As such, APAs believe this stereotyped view allows society to neglect their needs with a clear conscience (Nakanishi, 1983).

In addition, many Asian American families are still strongly influenced by the patriarchal Asian family tradition. In these families, the women are expected to assume a passive, subservient role (Chu, 1980).

Hune (1997) reports that most APAs reject the "model minority" theory and explains that racial and gender discrimination are primarily responsible for the underrepresentation of qualified APA women in higher education administration.

Being Female

Sex role stereotyping is the single most important barrier for women (Ayer, 1984). The persistent negative stereotypes of Asian American women deny them the opportunity for personal growth. Some are viewed as erotic, sex objects ("Suzy Wong"); as passive, subservient women (Mrs. Livingston in "Courtship of Eddie's Father"); as "dragon lady," if strong and assertive; or as hardworking and uncomplaining hand-maidens--the "sexless worker-bee" (Bradshaw, 1994; True, 1990).

To complicate matters further, because education is highly prized in Asian culture, APA women are encouraged to obtain and education and achieve success so as not to shame their families (Comas-Diaz, 1994). Ironically, however, APA women are socialized by their own culture to tend first to the needs of significant others before their own. Further, when APA women seek a professional position, they exhibit ambition, an undesirable Asian female trait (Comas-Diaz, 1994).

Beyond the Double Bind

Beyond the existing stereotypes of APA women are other barriers imposed by cultural expectations. The first is the male dominance of key positions that effectively shuts women out of administrative positions. Change here is limited and, therefore, successors mirror those males who brought them "in" (Hill, 1995).

Second, a lack of political savvy precludes potential female applicants by advancing those succeeding who have been groomed by the "good-old boys" network (Hill, 1995).

Last, the internal barriers and biases against women work to their disadvantage. Women have always been stereotyped as "inferior and weak" (Comas-Diaz, 1994).

What Will Bring Them In?

In order to attract more APA women to educational administration programs, higher education must provide: (a) a definitive program of training in educational leadership that recognizes cultural and gender

differentiation and enhances the teaching of leadership skills so as to reach more of these different groups, and (b) a statement of its commitment to provide the guidance and opportunities that enable APA (and other minority) women to overcome the barriers that keep them from ascending the ranks of educational administration.

Skills and traits found to be most valuable to APA women in educational leadership are:

- Communication skills that reflect decisive, ambitious abilities and assertive verbal and nonverbal behavior (Manera, 1995; Yamauchi, 1981)
- A strong internal locus of control that incorporates a combination of Asian and American value orientations and a rejection of the stereotypes attributed to them (Yamauchi, 1981)
- Goal setting
- Mentoring and networking
- Organization and preparation
- Humor

(Manera, 1995).

In addition, the Yamauchi (1981) study also described the need for all persons in positions to influence APA women (counselors, professors, employers) to "become more sensitive to the existing cultural and societal variables that affect APA women in their efforts to gain socioeconomic and occupational equity, thereby reducing the tendency of others to stereotype APA women in narrow role sets."

Implications for Education

Higher education curriculum planners are challenged to further enhance educational leadership programs by incorporating development of those leadership skills identified above.

Leonard and Papa-Lewis (1987) suggested that universities adopt the following interventions:

- Provide information and training on diverse and effective styles of leadership
- Establish mentoring programs to provide aspirants with significant positive exposure to capable women and minorities to alter negative stereotyping
- Provide support, counseling, and training interventions in areas such as assertiveness, decision-making, and goal setting to foster their interest, skills, and commitment to careers in educational administration

Implications for APA Women

APA women who aspire to positions in higher education administration must also actively participate in their own professional development. The Yamauchi (1981) study, for example, encouraged APA women to become culturally aware; that is, in order to deal with their own cultural adjustment processes, these women must understand culturally pluralistic attitudes and behaviors.

Leonard and Papa-Lewis (1987) noted that women and minorities who aspire to educational administration positions must ensure they meet psychological and formal qualifications--appropriate attitudes, education, and experience for entry-level positions; they also need to be confident, motivated, prepared, and, finally, committed to a career in administration.

Conclusion

Hindering the advancement of women in academic leadership costs the institution talent it can ill-afford to lose (Hill, 1995). It is not enough to acknowledge that Asian American women are underrepresented in higher education administration. Universities must strive to incorporate greater numbers of APA women into their training programs.

New directions can be forged with the revision or restructuring of programs to incorporate those professional leadership skills, personal attributes, and sensitization to awareness needed by APA women in order to succeed.

While not a panacea, a revamped curriculum can play a major role in eliminating the conflicts that bind APA women and in making them more visible in higher education administration.

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